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ABSTRACT

A major review of vocational education and training has occurred across the United Kingdom since 1986. Employment requirements are being identified in the form of occupational standards that provide the foundation for the new system of vocational qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Standards describe what people need to be able to do in the work environment and are expressed in terms of the outcomes people are expected to achieve. Each NVQ is made up of a selection of units from the standards. Each unit consists of element titles, performance criteria, and range statements. A nationally agreed methodology for developing standards has been established and refined under the aegis of the Employment Department. Employers are to play a key role in setting and operating the national standards. They are expected to set up assessment systems approved by awarding bodies and ensure that they have the capacity to provide training or to negotiate for training needs to be met through contracts with outside providers. Benefits for employers attributed to standards and NVQs include the following: improved staff motivation, improved quality of product or services, a tool for workforce planning, skill-mix review and job redefinition, attracting and retaining staff, and recruitment advertising. Individuals benefit, since the movement towards flexible delivery of learning materials is given considerable impetus through NVQ developments. (Contains 11 references.) (YLB)

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National
Occupational
Information
Coordinating
Committee

NOICC Occasional Paper 6

Skills Standards, British Style

Linking Assessment and Training in the United Kingdom

Wendy M. Newton

Toward improving communication and coordination among developers and users of occupational, career, and labor market information

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November 1993

NOICC Occasional Paper 6

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Wendy M. Newton

The NOICC/SOICC Network

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) promotes the development and use of occupational, career, and labor market information. It is a federal interagency committee, established by Congress in 1976. Its members represent ten agencies within the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Commerce, Agriculture, and Defense.

NOICC has two basic missions. One is to improve communication and coordination among developers and users of occupational and career information. The other is to help states meet the occupational information needs of two major constituencies: (1) planners and managers of vocational education and job training programs and (2) individuals making career decisions.

NOICC works with a network of State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs), also established by Congress in 1976. SOICC members represent state vocational education boards, vocational rehabilitation agencies, employment security agencies, job training coordinating councils, and economic development agencies. Many also include representatives from higher education and other state agencies.

The NOICC/SOICC Network supports a variety of occupational information programs and systems. Some provide data to help in planning vocational education and job training programs. Others offer information for individuals who are exploring occupational options and making career decisions. In addition, NOICC sponsors national and state training programs and materials. These offer further assistance to state and local agency personnel who work with occupational and career information systems and career development programs.

Organizations and individuals undertaking special projects funded by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee are encouraged to express their professional judgments. The analysis, interpretation, and opinions expressed in this document, therefore, do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of NOICC members or their representatives, or the NOICC staff, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Acknowledgements

This occasional paper was prepared for the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee by Wendy M. Newton. Ms. Newton presented ideas from the paper during a panel on Perspectives on Work Force Development at the National SOICC Conference in August 1993 in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida. She is currently working at the Vocational Qualifications Centre of The Open University, Milton Keynes, England, on linking existing degree courses to the competence-based qualifications described in her paper.

The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of colleagues at The Open University for commenting on an earlier version of this paper and NOICC staff for the difficult task of transcending the cultural as well as the geographical gap.

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The Author

Wendy M. Newton is currently running the "Pathways" National Development Project based at the Vocational Qualifications Centre, The Open University, in the United Kingdom. The work is funded by the Employment Department and a consortium of Training and Enterprise Councils.

From 1990 she was Director of Vocational and Professional Development at the National Health Service Training Directorate, where she managed the development and promoted implementation of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) within the Health Service and worked closely with representatives of other organisations in the Care Sector on the Industry Lead Body for Care, the Care Sector Consortium.

From 1986 to 1990, Ms. Newton led a number of projects at the National Council for Educational Technology (NCET), first as Programme Manager for Open and Flexible Learning, latterly as Director of Training, Higher and Further Education programmes. In particular she led the Industry Evaluation for the Learning Technology Unit of the Employment Department's "AI Applications to Learning Programme" (1987-1990).

In the field of computer assisted careers guidance systems, she contributed a paper to the EURIT 90 Conference, "Technology in Relation to Human and Social Development." She directed the work NCET carried out in collaboration with the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) and Queen Mary and Westfield Colleges of the University of London to pilot and evaluate the PROSPECT (HE) Computerised Careers Guidance system with students aged 16-19. In 1988 she reported to the Employment Department's Training Agency on the implications for the adoption and integration of a number of computer aided guidance systems within Training Access Points, based on a one year's developmental and evaluative study.

Earlier work with The Open University's Institute of Educational Technology focussed on the introduction of Computer Based Training into British Companies and the development of a computer based Training Needs Analysis for small firms. Earlier in her career she worked in adult education, running an Adult Education Centre and lectured in Social Anthropology at the University of Natal, South Africa. She also is the author or co-author of a number of publications on the use of computers in careers guidance and company training and on the development of National Vocational Qualifications.

Foreword

Relating Education to Work — The Skills/Standards Match

The rapid expansion of a global economy and an explosion of new technologies have prompted serious debate in many countries on how to remain or become more competitive in the international market place. Lester Thurow in *Head to Head* writes, "While technology creates man-made comparative advantage, seizing that man-made comparative advantage requires a work force skilled from top to bottom. . . . Skilled people become the only sustainable competitive advantage."[1]

To improve workforce skills, we must understand how to connect or integrate academic education with professional training, including both occupation-specific skills and broader-based high performance work place skills. In this paper Wendy Newton describes work in the United Kingdom to develop a national framework of vocational qualifications, or competencies, that relate to industry skill standards. Many of the issues she discusses are similar to concerns the United States is just beginning to address: the development of skills standards, the linking of standards to vocational competencies and curriculum design, development of assessment instruments to measure student attainment, certification standards, and improvement of the school-to-work transition.

Ms. Newton notes that, in the United Kingdom, "The vocational training system had grown haphazardly. It had not been designed to cope with the need for flexible retraining opportunities demanded by individuals and needed in a modern economy. . . . [It was] almost entirely provider-led." She argues that national skills standards provide the foundation for a new and more customer-centered system of competency-based vocational education. She describes efforts to develop core competencies, which cross several occupations, as well as occupation-specific competencies. This approach would support a system designed to address needs common to many occupations while also providing for very specialized training in skills unique to a smaller range of occupations. As her paper illustrates, developing such standards requires a long-term effort and the cooperation and commitment of numerous and diverse constituencies.

Once national standards have been developed, implementing them at the local level presents another crucial challenge. Ms. Newton stresses the role and responsibility of employers in this endeavor, arguing that the success of the system "demands a real commitment and investment on the part of the employer if the standards and qualifications are not to simply lie on the shelf." In return, she emphasizes how employers stand to gain from their investment. She also discusses potential benefits for workers, for providers of education and training, and for students as well.

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[1] Lester Thurow (1992), *Head to Head*, New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., p. 51.

Competition is a hallmark of the free market system. As the United States looks toward the future, it is only natural that we consider our competitive position relative to other countries. Yet we must also recognize that other countries are facing the same issues and that we can all learn from sharing our experiences. U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich has argued for "a positive economic nationalism, in which each nation's citizens take primary responsibility for enhancing the capacities of their countrymen for full and productive lives, but who also work with other nations to ensure that these improvements do not come at others' expense."[1]

At the 1993 Annual SOICC Conference in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, NOICC brought together representatives from Japan, Russia, India, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States to discuss some of these workforce issues and strategies they have undertaken to deal with them. We hope that this paper, shared with us by Ms. Newton, further exemplifies the benefits of cooperation as we move toward a new economic system that depends on and recognizes the value of our human resources and invests in them accordingly.

Juliette N. Lester
Executive Director

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[1] Robert B. Reich (1992), *The Work of Nations*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., p. 311.

Skills Standards, British Style

Linking Assessment and Training in the United Kingdom

Vocational qualifications, performance standards, and skills standards — What they are, why they are necessary, how you go about developing them, and how they may best be applied

Wendy M. Newton

Introduction

A new system of vocational qualifications is being introduced in the United Kingdom. These new qualifications are awarded for competence in performing to specified national occupational standards in real work situations, reflecting knowledge and understanding of the work concerned.

A coherent framework of qualifications, ranging from the basic competences required in some job situations to those requiring professional competences, now cuts through the confusion and lack of comparability that prevailed in the past. Qualifications will be available in occupational areas as diverse as Steelmaking, Floristry, and Advice; Guidance and Counselling.

The national standards upon which these qualifications are based are set by Industry Lead Bodies made up of representatives of employers, employees, trainers, and awarding bodies in each occupational area. The qualifications are accredited by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications[1] set up by the Government to oversee their development.

This paper draws upon the author's experience in developing qualifications in Health Care as well as current work within The Open University linking existing degree courses to the new competence-based qualifications.

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[1] NCVQ's remit covers England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) oversees developments, accredits qualifications, and acts as awarding body.

A National Framework of Vocational Qualifications

The Imperative and the Response

A major review and rationalisation of all aspects of vocational education and training has taken place across the UK since 1986. In that year, a Government White Paper identified training as a key element in improving Britain's competitiveness vis-à-vis her industrial competitors, particularly Japan, Germany, and the USA. The Government recognised the need to help industry and the workforce gear up to the occupational changes consequent on the structural changes following recession and the impact of technology. At the time, British industry spent less on training than any of its competitors.

Before this 1986 review, apart from traditional apprenticeships and on-the-job training (which was rarely accredited and often not transferable between employment settings), education and training was almost entirely provider-led. Colleges and awarding bodies determined the curriculum — what students should learn and for how long, as well as how and when they should be assessed. Many individuals found they were excluded from vocational education and training opportunities by barriers imposed by entry qualifications, course attendance regulations, age limits, and other regulations. The vocational training system had grown haphazardly. It had not been designed to cope with the need for flexible retraining opportunities demanded by individuals and needed in a modern economy.

There was a confusing plethora of awarding bodies and levels and types of qualification. Indeed, more than 200 bodies were awarding qualifications. Employers were at a loss to know how to compare different qualifications or evaluate their relevance to their needs. They certainly did not understand what holding a particular qualification meant in terms of what an employee was able to do at work and to what standard. They often had to start upon lengthy and costly processes of retraining a worker who had been through a supposedly vocationally relevant course. For some occupations, there were no qualifications.

The Government's determination to give priority to its policy of reform was reinforced in May 1992 at the conference, "World Class Britain," through the launch of the mission statement:

> *"To provide the world's most effective national framework of vocational qualifications"*

The Government has set a number of National Education and Training Targets and has urged employers as well as education and training providers to do their part in achieving them. Key among these targets are:

- by 1996, 50 percent of the workforce will be aiming for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or units towards them, and

- by 2000, 50 percent of the workforce will be qualified to at least NVQ level 3

Part of the Government's strategy has been to devolve responsibility for training from central government departments to locally run Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) dominated by employer interests. One of the roles of these TECs is to mobilise assessment and training resources to meet local employment needs. The Government encourages TECs to work toward meeting the National Education and Training Targets by linking their funding, where possible, to achievement of targets related to the national goals.

The UK is now moving to customer-centered provision. Employment requirements are being identified in the form of occupational standards, which are published and readily available. The standards themselves provide the foundation upon which is built the new system of vocational qualifications.

Definition: Building Blocks for a New System

NVQs are based on nationally recognised standards. They are qualifications about work, based on measurable standards of performance determined through extensive consultation. For the first time, these set out what is expected of workers at different levels of competence. The outcomes of education and training are expressed in terms of what holders of the awards can do and to what standard.

The standards describe what people need to be able to do in the work environment. They reflect not only the routine and technical aspects, but also the way in which work is managed, the inter-personal relationships, and the values the organisation wishes to be expressed in action (equal opportunities, for example). The underpinning knowledge and understanding required for successful performance are also made explicit. The standards are expressed in terms of the outcomes people are expected to achieve, rather than the specific tasks they carry out or the skills they need to do those tasks.

One of the uses of standards is as the basis for NVQs. Each NVQ is made up of a selection of units from the standards, covering a fairly self-contained area of work. Units are the building blocks of each qualification and are like mini qualifications used as credits. This modular structure gives flexibility for the individual, who accumulates credits that add up to a particular NVQ. Some units may count for more than one NVQ.

Each unit consists of:

- **element titles** that describe what someone can achieve in output terms,
- **performance criteria** that indicate what has to be demonstrated to show competence, and
- **range statements** that define the instances in which evidence of competence is required.

For the individual, assessment involves demonstrating that she can meet the standard, preferably in the work place. Units can be assessed when the candidate is ready, at any reasonable time and place that suit the candidate and the assessor. Quality and consistency are assured through a system of verifiers appointed by the awarding body for a particular qualification. In addition, assessors must themselves demonstrate competence in assessment, and assessment centres have to meet certain criteria before they can be approved by awarding bodies.

Developing Standards: Voyage on a Choppy Sea

This section draws upon the author's personal experience managing the development of standards and qualifications for a range of occupations in the care sector, including health care support workers, ambulance personnel, and operating department assistants. Figure 1 summarises steps in the development process.

The standards in care were developed through an intensive and lengthy process involving the contribution of more than 2,500 individuals from the public, voluntary, and private sectors in both Health and Social Care. They included professionals, staff representatives, employers, managers, trainers, and representatives of educational bodies. They contributed through participating in workshops to develop the standards; by commenting on and proposing refinements via postal questionnaires, interviews, and workshops; and by piloting the work to test and evaluate the feasibility of proposed assessment strategies.

Figure 1

How Are Standards Developed?

1. Who works in the sector?
   (Defining the domain)

2. What do they actually DO?
   (Occupational mapping)

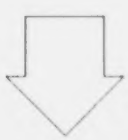
3. What competences do they have?
   (Functional analysis)

DRAFT STANDARDS

4. Are the standards acceptable?
   (Consultation/field testing)

5. How can competence be assessed?
   (National pilot)

6. What should the qualification content and structure be like?
   (Consultation)



Recommendations for NCVQ and SCOTVEC

A nationally agreed methodology for developing standards was established and refined under the aegis of the Employment Department, the Government department that has funded the bulk of the work. The responsibility for developing appropriate standards has been given to bodies set up to represent the interests of a particular occupational area, known as Industry Lead Bodies (ILBs). The Care Sector Consortium, the Lead Body which developed the standards for care, was an amalgam of interests drawn from the Health and Social Care sectors. It included representatives of management, staff unions, professional and regulatory bodies, and various levels of local government, as well as representatives from the voluntary sector and private sector interests in care.

The Consortium first carried out a workforce survey of its occupational field, mapping the numbers in different functional roles. The first priority area for standards development was decided mainly on the basis of the biggest need. There were a large number of workers for whom no qualifications existed. Yet they performed vital roles in care settings, delivering "hands on" care under the supervision or guidance of qualified professional staff such as nurses, midwives, health visitors, chiropodists, and social workers. This large group of support staff work in nursing and residential homes, hospitals, clinics, day care centres, and in the clients' own homes. Many have no qualification certifying their considerable skills and competence, and have had little chance of improving their status collectively or through individual career advancement.

In the health service, parallel developments were affecting the availability of support for qualified health care professionals. The first of these was the introduction of a new system of training for student nurses: Project 2000 linked nurses' professional qualifications with higher education and radically reduced the time spent by student nurses in the work place as part of the care delivery team. In addition, the "demographic time bomb" — the drop in the birthrate in the 1970s — was expected to result in fewer school leavers seeking employment in the 1990s; hence it was believed there would be greater competition for recruitment. Young people, it was thought, would be better disposed towards potential employers who could offer progression through training for recognised qualifications. Such trends gave further impetus to the development work.

Following the mapping, a questionnaire survey was carried out with a sample of workers to establish the settings in which they worked and what they actually did in their day-to-day work. It revealed that their job roles and responsibilities were very diverse. Attempts to analyze job descriptions failed: for many, none existed; even where they did, there was little correlation or consistency between job title, job description, and actual job role.

The solution arrived at was to carry out a functional analysis of roles performed in each area. This task began with a mission statement which encapsulated the essence of what each occupation was trying to achieve while at the same time maintaining the holistic

nature of care by affirming its underpinning principles and values. The purpose of the standards is to improve the quality of care. They are focussed on the needs of clients. This consideration lies at the heart of the standards.

A model of core competences with specialist competences was developed to show where common competence exists while at the same time reflecting the wide variety of job roles. The key roles were broken down into functions and activities — statements of competence. Performance criteria define the qualities considered essential to competence on the job, together with statements of the "range" of situations and contingencies with which the individual must be able to cope.

Once the first phase of development was completed, the standards were tested out through consultation with those whose job it would be to implement them. The assessment strategy devised by awarding bodies working with the Consortium was also tested to ensure that the proposed methods for measuring and recording achievement were workable.

The development was a voyage through a choppy sea: it provided a challenge to existing work patterns and responsibilities that had developed through custom and practice but were in essence not formally recognised. Many professionals were unwilling to give explicit recognition to the amount of delegated responsibility carried by support workers. Suggestions that these new qualifications could become an alternative route to professional recognition and training were staunchly resisted by these professionals, who themselves were fighting for recognition in the traditional and hierarchical world of the health service.

Once standards were agreed, the awarding bodies developed groupings of units into qualifications which, together with assessment mechanisms, were then submitted for national accreditation. A comprehensive framework sets out the relation of NVQs and their level. The role of the National Council is to accredit the qualifications and assign them a level.

Applications and Implications

The main focus of this paper has been on how nationally recognised standards are used as the building blocks for a new system of vocational qualifications. The introduction and assessment of these standards have potentially far-reaching implications for employers and education and training providers alike.

Key Role for Employers

Government ideology and strategy are rooted in the key role to be played by employers in setting and operating the national standards.

At the national level, a crucial lead has been given by major employers organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry, and employers have supported and participated in the setting of standards through their representation on Lead Bodies. At a more local level, they are represented on Training and Enterprise Councils. Government funding to TECs is in part linked to targets for delivery of NVQ outcomes and their contribution to achieving National Training Targets. For the TECs to achieve their targets, local employers have to play their part. Thus the key to success of the Government's strategy lies in the degree to which employers are encouraged to embrace these new developments.

The development of standards alone does not guarantee their success in raising skills levels and competitiveness. Systems must be set in place for assessment of standards, for awarding qualifications, and for training. This demands a real commitment and investment on the part of the employer if the standards and qualifications are not simply to lie on the shelf.

Employers are expected to set up assessment systems approved by awarding bodies. Employers who plan to carry out assessment at the work place must have qualified work-based assessors. To qualify, the assessors must satisfy the awarding body that they meet the standards of the Training and Development Lead Body. In addition, employers will need to ensure that they have the capacity to provide training or to negotiate for training needs to be met through contracts with outside providers. The alternative is for employers to buy in both assessment and training to employ a "just in time" approach — what they need, when they need it. The needs of smaller employers in the care sector are being met by innovative colleges who have introduced peripatetic assessment. In such instances, the assessor visits the individual candidate's work place in order to carry out the assessment.

Potential Benefits for Employers

With the exception of a number of larger employers, it has yet to be seen how the standards will be taken up by industry at large, particularly by the majority of small and medium sized enterprises. If past record is a guide, employers will need to be persuaded of more than the training argument before embarking on the necessary investment in their

human resources. Some other benefits and uses attributed to standards and NVQs may persuade them:

- **Improved staff motivation** — Staff may be keen to prove their capability and competence by offering themselves for work-based assessment and training. This opportunity may be particularly important to those who have not been academically successful in earlier life and who now have the opportunity to demonstrate their worth through assessment directly related to their work.

- **Improved quality of products or services** — Standards may be regarded as a driving force to improve the quality of output.

- **A tool for workforce planning** — Standards may be used as a resource to assess the level of skills already in existence within the organisation. They also offer a resource for judging staff performance in a form that can be integrated into appraisal and personal development systems.

- **Skill mix review and job re-profiling** — Standards allow employers to move away from narrowly defined and categorised jobs towards roles that allow better use of staff resources, scarce professional competences, and specialisms.

- **Attracting and retaining staff** — The offer of the opportunity for assessment for NVQs may become an important part of attractive employment packages that help employers address recruitment and retention issues.

- **Recruitment advertising** — Employers increasingly are using standards as an aid to recruitment. They help to specify what is required of a new recruit and represent proof that someone can actually do the job.

NVQs may be delivered through work-based assessment at the individual's normal place of work. Alternatively the system allows for education and training providers to assess in simulated work situations or through work placement, thus ensuring access for those not currently in employment and offering flexibility for employers.

Opening Up Possibilities for Providers

Prior to recent major changes in the Further Education sector, Colleges had been regarded as out of touch with employers' needs. They imposed barriers to access through entry and attendance requirements and often did not take account of potential students' experience. Even Open Learning had not been embedded, but was marginalised as the

majority of colleges regarded their Open Learning Centres as outside the core of their operations.[1]

Colleges providing vocational training offered courses leading to the qualifications of a variety of nationally recognised awarding bodies, such as the City and Guilds of London Institute, the Royal Society of Arts, and the Business and Technician Education Council. The problem was the comparability of qualifications. How did an RSA 2 compare with a BTEC National Diploma?

The new system of NVQs solves the comparability problem. Such sets of qualifications, while retaining their own title, have been redeveloped to reflect nationally agreed standards of performance. These are accredited at a particular level by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. As a result, everyone can understand what the holder of one of these qualifications is able to do and to what standard. The national standards now become the backbone for new vocational courses.

One of the key characteristics of the NVQ approach is that it is prescriptive only with regard to outcomes. Competence and its underpinning knowledge can be acquired from a variety of different routes, not just from college and university courses.

Work-based learning and competence acquired in non-formal study and work can be recognised. For example, skills acquired during caring at home or in voluntary work can be recognised. Thus there is scope for variation and innovation in the design and delivery of training materials and courses, prepared to respond to individuals' needs.

NVQs have no entry requirements, no time-serving. For colleges to impose these would be counter to the prevailing philosophy and would meet resistance from employers and

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[1] In essence, Open Learning offers learning opportunities that are open in terms of access, time, place, and pace. Individuals are not restricted by entry requirements, by course timetables, or fixed locations. They can study in their own time, wherever they choose and at their own pace. Ideally, an open learning system would put the learner at the centre of the model, supported by high quality, interactive learning materials, accessible tutorial and counselling support, and efficient administrative support.

The growth of Open Learning in the United Kingdom was first promoted by the Council for Educational Technology, through its Open Learning Programmes. In the 1980s, it was encouraged through "Open Tech" projects funded by the Manpower Services Commission, whereby Colleges of Further Education and companies bid for funds to establish open learning centres.

The Open University was founded by Royal Charter in 1969 as a fully autonomous, independent university. It has become the United Kingdom's largest single educational institution.

trainees alike. The challenge for colleges comes in working with employers to design training to meet their needs and to respond to the requirements for assessment.

Responsive and forward-looking colleges have established systems for the accreditation of prior experience and learning. They offer counselling to potential candidates for assessment, as well as training and assessment to the recognised standards for work-based assessors. They also provide peripatetic assessment for employers, such as those in small residential care homes or small businesses, for whom the costs of setting up their own assessment centres would be prohibitive.

Flexible Training for Individuals

The movement towards flexible delivery of learning materials is given considerable impetus through NVQ developments. Individuals can gain accreditation and learn at their own pace, and the place where the learning occurs will depend on the individual's circumstances at work, at home, or at a college. In particular, distance and open learning materials, provision of short courses, and flexible timetabling can meet learners' rather than the institution's needs.

New forms of assessment of competence in work-related or simulated activities are being introduced. Assessment can be at any time the candidate is ready to be assessed — he does not have to wait for all other candidates to be assessed at the same time. In some qualifications areas, candidates may present evidence of their competence and achievement through a portfolio approach, which may include evidence of prior experience. The key to successful assessment is that the candidate is competent now, not at some time in the past.

These challenges are being taken very seriously by The Open University. More than 200,000 people are currently pursuing undergraduate or higher degrees and professional studies with The University, and 70 percent of them are currently in employment. The University is now the UK's largest single educational institution. It is also a world leader in open and distance learning. It has developed a flexible multi-media teaching system that includes specially produced textbooks, local tuition and other support services, short residential schools, home experiment kits, computer networks, audio-visual materials, and broadcasts on national radio and television.

A Vocational Qualifications Centre has been set up to act as a focus for work on vocational qualifications throughout The Open University. Its work includes introducing assessment for standards among the university's own staff and working with course development teams to demonstrate the relationship of existing courses to vocational

qualifications. New course development will increasingly take cognisance of vocational qualifications and build in guidance to degree and other students on how they can gain both types of qualifications.

Conclusion: New Quangos and Questions

Developing the new system has consumed much energy among professionals in the Employment and Training world and provided much work for consultants who early in the game got to grips with the methodology. A new set of quangos[1] has been set up and new careers made.

Among the questions yet to be resolved are:

- To what extent will the new qualifications be accepted as giving access to routes to higher education and professional qualifications?

- Will the standards be responsive to future skills developments or will they be caught in a time warp? How will funding be made available for future modifications and revisions? The Government's past record in the training field has been to fund development work and then leave implementation to the private sector.

- Might codifying occupational standards lead to a leveling down of standards rather than improving quality of service delivery and output?

Implementation to date has been very much top down. The key to implementing any innovation in the field of Human Resource Development is whether those taking it on board really believe it is in their interests to do so.

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[1] Quangos are quasi-non governmental organisations. They are semi-public bodies, with financial support from and senior appointments made by the government.

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1. *Occupational Information and International Development: Improving HRD Diagnostics*, John E. S. Lawrence (December 1990)

2. *An Appraisal of NOICC/SOICC Needs for Data from the 1990 Decennial Census*, Richard E. Dempsey (February 1991)

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5. *Occupational Information: The "Blue Highways" of the Labor Market*, David W. Stevens (August 1993)

6. *Skills Standards, British Style: Linking Assessment and Training in the United Kingdom*, Wendy M. Newton (November 1993)

From Pilot to Practice: Strengthening Career Development Programs, Juliette N. Lester, Editor (November 1992). This monograph was co-sponsored by NOICC and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education.

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NOICC Training Support Center

The NOICC Training Support Center (NTSC) coordinates the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee's training programs and conferences on a nationwide basis. NTSC provides the NOICC/SOICC Network with ongoing training capabilities, materials, and a pool of experienced trainers and resource persons for its programs and conferences.

The training center is designed to serve four primary functions in connection with major NOICC programs: product development, communication and coordination, network development and support, and training and technical support.

The NTSC operates through the Oklahoma State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee. The center is based at the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education in Stillwater. The Oklahoma Vo-Tech agency, Oklahoma State University (OSU) Educational Television Services, and the OSU College of Education's School of Occupational and Adult Education combine resources and staff to operate the training center.

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